

March 28, 2017 at 10:00am
Conference Room 229

Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Health

To: Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair
Senator Clarence K. Nishihara, Vice Chair

From: Michael Robinson
Vice President & Government Relations

Re: **SCR 112**

My name is Michael Robinson, Vice President and Government Affairs at Hawai'i Pacific Health. Hawai'i Pacific Health (HPH) is a not-for-profit health care system with over 70 locations statewide including medical centers, clinics, physicians and other caregivers serving Hawai'i and the Pacific Region with high quality, compassionate care. Its four medical centers – Kapi'olani, Pali Momi, Straub and Wilcox – specialize in innovative programs in women's health, pediatric care, cardiovascular services, cancer care, bone and joint services and more. Hawai'i Pacific Health is recognized nationally for its excellence in patient care and the use of electronic health records to improve quality and patient safety.

I write in support of SCR 112 which requests that the Department of Health convene a working group to develop recommendations to increase colorectal cancer screening rates in the State.

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths for men and the third for women in the State. Because colorectal cancer has very few symptoms, screenings are critical for detection and early treatment of the cancer.

Hawai'i Pacific Health would welcome participation in any working group to create a plan for increasing detection of colorectal cancer.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SCR 112.

Senate COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, CONSUMER PROTECTION, AND HEALTH
Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair
Senator Clarence K. Nishihara, Vice Chair

LATE

FROM: LorMona Meredith

RE: SCR112, REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO CONVENE A WORKING GROUP TO DEVELOP RECOMMENDATIONS TO INCREASE COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENING RATES IN THE STATE.

Aloha Chair Baker, Vice Chair Nishihara and other members of the committee,

My name is LorMona Meredith and I am a colon cancer survivor. I am testifying in support of this concurrent resolution because I want to ensure that Hawaii residents never have to go through the pain and suffering caused by colorectal cancer.

I was born in Kahuku, Hawai'i, then moved to American Samoa when I was about 4 years old, and then later to Samoa, where I spent a great part of my life. I am the oldest of 8 children; 6 boys, 2 girls. Cancer was rarely heard of or spoken of in our household back then, and if it was, I always thought of it as a plot line in a soap opera or a disease that would never affect me. Back then no one I knew had it, so I wasn't directly affected by it, and since I wasn't affected by it, I did not care to know more about it.

On March 5th 2013, I underwent an upper GI endoscopy and colonoscopy. After the procedure that morning, I was wheeled down to my doctor's office where I was shown the results and told that I had moderately differentiated adenocarcinoma, which fortunately for me had not metastasized. A biopsy was done on the tumor and I was later diagnosed with stage 3 colon cancer.

My first thought was - is this really happening to me? Is this for real? I was in shock and felt utterly alone. Then my thoughts turned to my children. Who would take care of them if something happened to me? A swirl of fears crept in: How was I going to get through all of this? What about money? What about my job? What can I do to get better? It was all so overwhelming!

I was fortunate to go through this most challenging time with an amazing support network. I had the help, faith and love of my family, friends, my healthcare team, and members of the community, strangers even, who had heard my story through a friend or on social media. I can't ever forget how I felt during that time of illness, from feeling down and alone, to feelings of being loved, cared for, lifted up and supported in so many different ways. With the aloha and support of so many people, I knew that although I was afraid and did not know what the future held for me and my little family, I was determined not to let cancer take over my life.

In late March 2013, I had surgery done to remove the tumor, then went through 6 months of intensive chemotherapy treatment. My second treatment left me with permanent peripheral neuropathy in my hands and feet, but that is something minor and I have lived with it for the past three years. My cancer went into remission in April 2014, and I have been cancer-free ever since.

There is still so much more work to be done. There are so many more things we can do to save the lives of those battling cancer -- as well as those who may be at risk -- in Hawai'i. This resolution will help to create a working group with the Department of Health and other community partners to improve colorectal cancer rates in our state. I urge this committee to support this resolution. Thank you.

Mahalo,
LorMona Meredith
Colon Cancer Survivor